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## Two G.O.P. Lawmakers Spar Over Climate Study

By ANDREW C. REVKIN

A public dispute has flared between two Republican House committee chairmen over an inquiry one of them began last month into the integrity of an influential study of global temperature trends.

The study, published in 1998 and 1999, meshed data from modern thermometers and evidence of past warmth or cold, like variations in tree rings. The result was a curve showing little variation for nearly 1,000 years and then a sharp upward hook in recent decades.

The inquiry was initiated by Representative Joe L. Barton of Texas, who heads the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, after two Canadians with no expertise in climate change published academic papers and opinion articles challenging the study's methods.

Letters requesting detailed responses to the criticisms as well as raw data, documents and financial information were sent last month by the committee to the scientists who generated the graph: Michael E. Mann, the climatologist who led the research and has just become the director of the Earth System Science Center at Pennsylvania State University; Raymond S. Bradley, a climatologist at the University of Massachusetts; and Malcolm K. Hughes, a tree-ring expert at the University of Arizona.

The inquiry has since been criticized by scientists and Democratic lawmakers. Now the critics have been joined by Representative Sherwood Boehlert of New York, the chairman of the House Science Committee, who late last week sent a letter to Mr. Barton calling the investigation "misguided and illegitimate."

Copies of the letter were provided to several reporters.

Mr. Boehlert noted that other recent analyses have supported the main conclusion of the study: that the climate's warming since the late 20th century appears to be significantly outside the bounds of natural variability.

But Mr. Barton's inquiry focuses on the critique by the Canadians, Steven McIntyre, an amateur statistician and mining consultant, and Ross McKittrick, an economist at the University of Guelph.

In his letter to Mr. Barton, Mr. Boehlert said the effort "raises the specter of politicians opening investigations against any scientist who reaches a conclusion that makes the political elite uncomfortable."

In a statement sent by e-mail to several reporters, Larry Neal, a spokesman for the Energy and Commerce Committee, responded to Mr. Boehlert's letter.

"Requests for information are a common exercise of the Energy and Commerce Committee's responsibility to gather knowledge on matters within its jurisdiction," the statement said. "When global warming studies were criticized and results seemed hard to replicate by other researchers, asking why seemed like a modest but necessary step. It still does."

Dr. Mann and Dr. Bradley sent long written responses to Mr. Barton and the committee late last week in which they defended their work and said the assertions about errors or deceptive practices were incorrect.

In interviews, several scientists dealing with climate and other contentious issues expressed concerns about Mr. Barton's apparent presumption that Congress might reveal truths that the scientific process cannot.

That sentiment was echoed in a letter sent to Mr. Barton on Friday by Ralph J. Cicerone, the new president of the National Academy of Sciences and one of the country's leading atmospheric chemists.

Dr. Cicerone said a Congressional investigation "is probably not the best way to resolve a scientific issue, and a focus on individual scientists can be intimidating."

He offered the services of the academy, which traditionally has served as an arbitrator on complicated, controversial scientific issues.